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M.V.A. FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

by

DAWN BURN

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF VISUAL ARTS

IN

PAINTING
DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1989

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend
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.....
.....
submitted by DAWN BURN
.....
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
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DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

GRADUATE STUDIES

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I hereby release the following works for incorporation into the University Collections, University of Alberta, as part of the Master of Visual Arts Thesis Collection:

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>MEDIUM</u>	<u>SIZE</u>
FALLING FORMS	MAY 24, 1989	OIL STICK ON PAPER	8'11"
FALLING FORMS	MAY 24, 1989	OIL STICK ON PAPER	8' 11"



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<https://archive.org/details/Burn1989>

SLIDE LIST

DANN BURN

- 1 Red (Painting/Drawing?)
Acrylic
2'x2'
October 1988
- 2 Yellow Relief
Acrylic
4'x4'
November 1988
- 3 Act III
Acrylic/Collage
4'x4'
December 1988
- 4 Untitled (With Silver Grid)
Acrylic/Collage
4'x4'
December 1988
- 5 Violet Air
(Early Stage of the Falling Form)
Acrylic/Collage on Canvas
4'1½"x 4'1½"
December 1988
- 6 The Big Finale
(Early Stage of the Falling Form Form)
Mixed Media on Paper and Panel
4'1¼"x 4'1¼"
February 1989
- 7 The Falling Forms
(In Loving Memory)
8'11" High
April 1989
- 8 The Falling Forms
(Passage)
8'11"x 2'8"
April 1989
- The Falling Forms (No.9- 21)
Oil Stick Collage Works
on Paper
8'11" High
April 1989- May 1989
- 18 Detail of No.17
- 22 Vancouver Island
(With Single Falling Form)
Water color/Graphite, Oil Stick
and Acrylic Collage
February 1989
- 23 Untitled Collage
8"x 8"x 8½"x 8½"
November 1988
- 24 Untitled
(Early Stage of the Falling Form)
Acrylic/Collage on Canvas
3'x 1'5"
January 1989

Dawn Burn

About the Falling Forms

The focus of this exhibition and my final year has developed out of a pervasive image, which established itself as a passage in many of my works throughout the year. This is the element of the falling forms.

For me this passage has an emotive quality, which is the reason for its recurrence. This compelling incident has developed into the fact of these works, rather than merely a passage of visual activity among many. Subsequent information, subordinated in the work, is supporting material (establishing environment), for the falling forms.

The strongest and most appealing of these shapes seen initially in the first of the oil stick collage works on paper, have been maintained and persistent throughout the series in my exploration of the fallen image, and how it works as material, and as vocabulary for me to express myself.

The work and material has been pushed and searched through in its development to find 'my' work rather than rehashing style without really saying anything to my self.

My hope and endeavor in this final visual statement of my graduate year is for my use of the visual medium to be meaningful, carrying however much meaning or significance material can carry.

Dawn Burn

When my work is poetic it can talk back to me; reminding me of the feeling and searching that it took to find that drawing or painting. 'Poetic', was offered to me as an observation of one of my earlier paintings ('Violet Air'), and that term, has stayed with me as a valued compliment, and direction. To me it meant that my work then had a quality with the power to move someone.

In the past I would never have admitted it to poetic tendencies, thinking that it implied too soft an edge to my painting. It's possibilities were denied a chance to develop. In abstract painting it seems there is always this danger of sounding wishy washy and not being taken seriously just because the issues behind it aren't visible. I have always admired this poetic quality in artists who were able to achieve and present something complex in a form so simply meaningful and movingly stated. It took me years to understand that you can't just invent it and it doesn't just come out of the blue. You have to find it within the process of doing the work. This is the problem and the challenge.

It is the endeavor and difficulty of my abstract painting and drawing to be completely honest. This means after learning so much about the elements of painting and absorbing it's techniques through observation and reaction there is now an automatic process of elimination that must take place in the working process. So, out comes the bad and the tired ideas, and habits of style allowing the good to follow I know as much as is necessary to understand what makes my painting or drawing work, or not

work, and why I do it and have come to realize that I have become a product of just so much learning.

Now in a sense is a need to forget it, to respond to my own work on it's own terms and on individual basis. All this so I can create something meaningful for myself, that does not refer to style but will be about a means of self expression. Similar to when I picked up my first crayon and did not understand what made a picture a picture. This however, also meant that I did not know when I created a good picture. But this wasn't the point then either. Out of my desire to create I made up my own rules to express how I saw things through whatever capacity I had for understanding what I experienced. Then I would move on to create another picture. I would like to get back the freedom of this stage now that I have learned to be selective. This would involve feeling confident in what I know and not judging it to be more or less than I should know. And then exploring and pushing the medium to find my expression.

In trying to understand the vital connection between my life and my art, the works are now becoming more specific. I recognize my life as being a series of experiences of which dying will be the ultimate and final one. Although the work has developed in terms of series of works of a particular look, I have become aware of one particular recurring issue, the poetic. I have focused on the poetic aspect of my work in my final series of work entitled 'The Falling Forms'. In the final drawing series I have attempted to isolate the one element from my paintings which

has been the most powerful and pervasive throughout all of the studies even though it at times got buried in the clutter of style and in the misguided goal of making a picture. This for me is the image of the falling forms particularly the collaged bits. These over time were referred to as a sort of raindrops, in the painting 'Violet Air'. This term pinpointed to a visual element in my work that was a mark and a latent idea among many within my studio area. The image of these words appealed to me as they implied specifically an image. Here was an element of my painting taking a supporting role as a passage which had the strength to be a complete statement if I pursued it which I then did. This broke the cycle of feeling the need to invent and losing the focus of my work due to a myriad of invented forms. The lightness of these falling forms offered the poetry and rhythms I desired.

I am isolating in final works this lyrical element of recurring rhythm.

It has been a struggle to find this sense of visual timing the rhythm and to maintain it while allowing it to develop.

What I have learned from my other work is to edit after the supporting information is present. This, for me, was a difficulty with acrylics. Although they offered me speed to suit my working habits, the colours and painting at some point tended to become dense and lifeless. The oil stick drawings give me a clearer focus of intent which I try to maintain. I subordinated all other information to the rhythm of the falling forms. But I need all

the drawn and collaged bits of information there to refer back to. This was the process of searching to find my sense of the image.

I have established the presence of the work in this presentation in relation to myself. In terms of scale the work is bigger than myself. I have to tackle it at first as a piece of paper on the ground with potential and then in front of me on the wall as a layer with it's initial markings. I want to establish it's position in front of me. First there is me before it. Then there is the space in between the work and myself that I establish as a working distance (which is not the optimum viewing distance). Then there are the collage bits, used at times to draw around and be removed to leave its ghost image or impression. These collage bits are to jump out of their ground or material; to be more physically present in that empty space before me. The other level that the objects alternate between is the environment within the work created on the paper through an interrelationship of marks and material which informs me of the action or presence of myself as a part of the work. The paper is the anchor. The image is illusion; it is abstract. But the paper and materials are apparently before us, and somewhere in between these layers of information and us we react confirming something real.

I move between paper and canvas. It is a comfortable way of working. Drawing used to be the fastest medium for me to work in. Now drawing and painting have met somewhere in the middle. My drawing has slowed down somewhat in the realization of the final

works and my painting has sped up in an effort to achieve some of the efficiency and freedom I feel in drawing. Paper and canvas each have their own properties, but I use them both to share and learn from each. I don't distinguish so much between painting and drawing anymore. Both combine collage forms. I have concluded my work this year with the oil stick drawings which, along with the paintings, are to be experienced as one continuous endeavour.

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